

February 28, 2020

To: Harris County Elected Officials and Department Heads

From: Shain Carrizal

Re: **County Operations Status Due to Severe Inclement Weather or Other Emergencies**

During events that impact all of Harris County, the County Judge will likely be asked to make public statements regarding the status of County Government Operations. For specific or localized events, an Elected Official or Department Head may need to make a decision relating to a specific location of their operations. Specific or localized events include severe weather limited to a certain area, power outage, hazardous material odor or spill, water line break, or loss of climate control.

Commissioners' Court has approved guidelines regarding County government operations status due to severe inclement weather or other emergencies. This policy outlines Elected Officials or Department Heads authority to suspend or delay operations for isolated or localized emergencies, to help keep both the public and employees safe. The policy also discusses the need and discretion in implementing contingency plans, designating personnel, including the option of allowing employees to work from home or use training resources when normal working locations are unavailable. A copy of the adopted policy is attached for your reference.

Elected Officials and Department Heads are responsible for communicating with both their employees and the public in the event of a site specific or localized incident necessitating a temporary closure or delayed schedule of their department/facility. Communication should include notification to the County Judge and Commissioners, Harris County Human Resources and Risk Management, and (if mobilized) to the Joint Operations Center of the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Elected Officials and Department Heads should determine, *in advance*, the work requirements of personnel during the suspension of normal business operations and adopt a continuity of operation plan (COOP), including planning for in-home work, training, or professional development that may be completed during times of delayed or suspended operations.

Please note that *Section 10* of the Harris County Personnel Policies & Procedures addresses time reporting during Emergency Situations as follows:

Commissioners Court is not authorized to provide Paid Leave retroactively. Accordingly, to be paid for absences such as, but not limited to, those described below, you will have to use available Vacation leave, Compensatory Time, Sick leave (only if appropriate), or Floating Holiday(s). If you *miss work in these situations, even with your supervisor's approval, but do not have any appropriate Paid Leave, you will likely be docked.*

Elected Officials and Department Heads are encouraged to allow their employees who do not have paid leave available to work from home or an alternative work location rather than being docked. Exempt employees who do not have any paid leave available **must** be given the opportunity to work from home or an alternative work location prior to being docked. For employees whose job functions cannot ordinarily be done via telecommuting, Elected Officials and Department Heads may consider allowing them to study training materials or obtain e-training via the Harris County Human Resources & Risk Management Training site. Contact the Office of Human Resources & Risk Management for additional information regarding these or other options at 713-274-5419.

If you have any questions relating to these guidelines or need assistance developing a COOP for your department, please contact Human Resources & Risk Management.

Contact numbers for HRRM are as follows:

Name	Office Phone:	Email:
Shain Carrizal – Sr. Director HRRM	713-274-5525	Shain.Carrizal@bmd.hctx.net
Erika Owens – Director, HR Compliance, Employee Relations, and Core Processes	713-274-5421	Erika.Owens@bmd.hctx.net
Sharon Moores – Manager, Benefits Administration	713-274-5503	Sharon.Moores@bmd.hctx.net
Lina Garcia – Sr. Manager, HR Compliance/ADA	713-274-5404	Lina.Garcia@bmd.hctx.net
Marris Beavers – Coordinator, Employee Relations	713-274-5491	Marris.Beavers@bmd.hctx.net
Gracie Guillen – Manager, Training	713-274-5419	Gracie.Guillen@bmd.hctx.net

Elected Officials, Department Heads and designated individuals of your agency are strongly encouraged to sign up for notifications from the Harris County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management of their **Regional Emergency Notification System (RENS)**. RENS messages provide valuable updates to and from partners, and include “For Official Use Only” information that can be critical during response operations.

To register for RENS messages, we encourage you and designated leadership from your organization to register at the following link:

You can register for RENS messages now at: <https://bit.ly/RENSSignup>

For additional information regarding this notification system, contact Hallie Frazee (Hallie.Frazee@oem.hctx.net, 713-426-9578).

HARRIS COUNTY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS STATUS AND DESIGNATION OF PERSONNEL GUIDE

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guide is to clarify the Harris County "Government Operations Status" process and designation of personnel in the event of suspension of normal operations due to severe inclement weather or other emergencies. Suspended or delayed operations are intended to help keep both the public and employees safe.

SCOPE

This guide applies to all Harris County employees. This guide presumes all Harris County employees can be utilized during an emergency, if warranted. Safety of employees remains first priority. Follow department/agency procedures for normal operations or for inclement weather or other emergencies. This guide does not supersede existing Harris County Personnel Regulations.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Temporary Closure or Delayed Schedule:

Harris County departments/agencies may be closed and normal operations suspended until further notice and will open and resume normal operations on a delayed timeframe. County employees are expected to arrive according to the schedule established by their department/agency.

Normal Operations:

Harris County is open and normal operating procedures are in effect. County employees are expected to report to work according to normal work hours.

GOVERNMENT CLOSURE OR DELAY

Harris County Judge:

Due to a state of emergency, and/or a disaster affecting Harris County, in conjunction with a declaration of a local state of disaster the Harris County Judge may order a "Temporary Closure" or "Delayed Schedule" for Harris County.

Employees whose roles are critical to emergency operations/response and others who are required should report to work as scheduled or requested by their Department Head during such conditions.

Department/Agency Heads¹:

In the event of a site specific or localized incident a County Department/Agency Heads (or their designee) can order a "temporary closure" or "delayed schedule" for their department/facility and for normal operations to resume at a

designated time. Site specific incidents may be due to limited area weather conditions, power outage, hazardous material odor or spill, water line break, or loss of climate control to name a few.

NOTIFICATION OF OFFICE CLOSURE OR DELAYED SCHEDULE

Department/Agency Heads are responsible for communicating with both their employees and the public in the event of a site specific or localized incident necessitating a temporary closure or delayed schedule of their department/facility. It is recommended that communication include notification to the County Judge and Commissioners and (if mobilized) to the Joint Operations Center of the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

DESIGNATION OF PERSONNEL

Harris County Departments/Agencies should determine, in advance, the work requirements of personnel during the suspension of normal business operations. The designation of personnel should be outlined in all department/agency continuity of operations plans (COOP). Agency/Department heads (or their designees) are responsible for classifying personnel based on the employee's duties as it relates to the Department/Agency's essential functions. For purposes of utilizing personnel during emergency operations and coordinating work assignments, employees could, (for example), be designated as a RED TEAM Employee, a WHITE TEAM Employee, or a BLUE TEAM Employee.

- RED TEAM Employee - An employee designated to sustain essential functions and operations of the department/agency. A RED TEAM Employee is expected to report to the appropriate work location even when a "temporary closure" has been issued for Harris County.
- WHITE TEAM Employee - An employee designated as support to essential functions. A WHITE TEAM Employee is required to check with his or her supervisor prior to going to a work location.
- BLUE TEAM Employee - An employee who will be asked to remain at home and may be called upon at a later time to support essential functions. A BLUE TEAM Employee is required to check with his or her supervisor for a duty assignment.

Employees should exercise discretion to ensure their personal safety during inclement weather or other emergencies. Departments/agencies are encouraged to plan in advance for in home work, training or professional development that may be completed during times of delayed or suspended operations.



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